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A NEW RACE OF PTARMIGAN IN ALASKA

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While working on Alaskan Willow Ptarmigan, considerable difficulty was encountered in properly assigning skins from Kodiak westward. This difficulty was intensified when six skins from the Aleutians (two from Atka and four from Unalaska) were examined. Additional skins were secured from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, California Academy of Science, and the Chicago Academy of Science to supplement those in the U. S. National Museum, the Fish and Wildlife Service collection, and the Gabrielson collection. These skins, where comparable in plumage, were examined and revealed an undescribed race of ptarmigan which is hereby named:

Lagopus lagopus muriei subsp. nov.

Type.—adult male (Fish and Wildlife Service coll. U.S.Nat. Mus. 366615) taken on Nagai Island in the Shumagin Islands, May 15, 1936, by O. J. Murie. This race is named for O. J. Murie in recognition of his contribution to Alaskan ornithology.

This form is distinguished from *L. l. alexandrae* which it most closely resembles by being redder and paler in the brown parts of the plumage. Birds from the Aleutians were both the reddest and palest of the group while those from Kodiak approached more closely Prince William Sound skins in comparable plumage. However, Kodiak skins both freshly collected and old specimens were more nearly like this new race. All birds used in this study were adults in breeding and post-breeding plumages.

As compared with *L. l. alascensis*, this race is much redder and darker when skins in comparable plumages are compared. *L. l. alascensis* is buffy; the new race, *muriei*, more reddish and darker, near walnut brown, while *alexandrae* is dark brown to bister.

There is no significant difference in measurements although *L. l. muriei* tends to have a more slender bill than the other races.

Only one adult female of this new race was available and no determination could therefore be made of female plumages.

Somewhat to our surprise, all birds from the Alaska peninsula were much closer to *L. l. alascensis*. Birds from Morzhovi Bay, only a few miles from False Pass, certainly belonged to *L. l. alascensis* also, while those from Unimak Island just as definitely belonged to the island group (*L. l. muriei*).

Twenty-five adult males from Atka, Unalaska, and Unimak Islands in the Aleutians, and from Unga, Nagai, Little Konaiiji, Simeonof, and Popof Islands in the Shumagins and Kodiak Island, the range ascribed to this new race, were available for comparison with seventeen *L. l. alexandrae*, and a large series of *L. l. alascensis* from the mainland included eight from the Alaska peninsula.